

### Director's Message



Building unity and creating opportunity was the theme of the first annual New Americans Appreciation Gala, which featured Gov. Rick Snyder as its keynote

speaker. Six New American business owners were given the New Americans Leadership award, presented by Gov. Snyder and the Chairpersons of each Ethnic Commissions, Noel Garcia Jr. of HLCOM, Jamie Hsu of MAPAAC and Manal Saab of CMEAA.

The awardees: were: Elizabeth Rosario of Grand Rapids Law Group, PLLC; Frank Venegas Jr. of Ideal Group, Chain Sandhu of NYX, Inc., Ravinder "Ron" Shahani of Acro Service Corp.; Mary Shaya of J&B Medical Supply and Mohamed Sohoubah of Biomed Specialty Pharmacy.

The Gala also acknowledged six additional community organizations that have made significant contributions to their respective communities. These Honorable Mentions included: Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce, Rasha Demashkieh, Irma Elder / Elder Automotive Group, Jose Pedro Galaviz / DHHS, Minnie Morey / WMAAA and Salim M. Sessine / MA Engineering.

The Gala was honored to have almost 400 guests in attendance representing forty different countries spanning all continents. Those in attendance personified the message of building unity and creating opportunity, as everyone that attended the gala was able to establish relationships and network with other Michiganders. The building of these relationships is critical to the continued growth of the economy and creating a broad spectrum of jobs for everyone in Michigan.

All three ethnic commissions collaborated to put on the gala and for the first time, held a joint commission meeting where MAPAAC, CMEAA, and HLCOM commission chairs presented their vision and mission to Lt. Gov. Brian Calley and held a question and answer session. The meeting also gave the commissioners a chance to connect and brainstorm on issues in their respective communities.

The Michigan International Talent Solutions (MITS) program also expanded its efforts to place New Americans in jobs across the state, by working with those in the private sector and helping them connect to New American talent. MITS will continue its growth as a program by bridging the gap between employers and New American talent.

As I reflect on 2017 and all the important things MONA and its partners have achieved and collaborated on, I am confident that MONA will continue to successfully serve its constituents. MONA will continue its commitment to collaboration and focus on expanding partnerships across the state. MONA will continue utilizing all resources to place New Americans in jobs that help not only grow the Michigan economically but culturally as well. As an organization, we look forward to working with you side by side in 2018 and to do so with great enthusiasm.

On behalf of MONA I wish everyone much success in the coming New Year.

- Bing Goei

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## Commission Spotlight



### COMMISSION ON MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN AFFAIRS M I C H I G A N

The Commission on Middle-Eastern American Affairs (CMEAA) was created by Executive Order 2015-6 and was initially housed in the Department of Civil Rights. Executive Order 2016-3 transferred it from the Department of Civil Rights to the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs where it is housed today.

The purpose of CMEAA is to act in an advisory capacity to the Governor and the Director. CMEAA consists of 15 commissioners appointed by the Governor, who work to monitor, evaluate, and advance the Middle-Eastern community. The commission also provides feedback on issues that the Middle-Eastern American Community faces in Michigan.

For a full list of [CMEAA Commissioners](#) please visit the [CMEAA website](#).

In 2016, the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (CMEAA) hosted six community town hall meetings. The purpose of these meetings was twofold: to introduce CMEAA to the Middle Eastern population in Michigan, and to listen to and document the prevailing needs and concerns of the Middle Eastern American community in Michigan.

At each town hall, the following question was posed to the community, “What are some concerns you face in your community.” In summary, CMEAA found that the most common concern was the refugee crisis, which reported concerns with housing, transportation, education, mental health services, and lack of translated forms. There were also concerns that Middle Eastern Americans were being perceived in the wrong light as a result of the current political climate. Lastly, many town hall attendees admitted that it was difficult to know where to access state and federally funded resources. CMEAA also co-sponsored an event that was hosted by International Policy Seminar. The event brought Mona Yacoubian, Deputy Assistant for the Middle East U.S. Agency for International Development, to Michigan where she held a presentation and discussion on U.S. assistance programs in the Middle East.

#### **CMEAA Study Partnership with Wayne State University**

The State of Michigan is home to one of the largest, oldest and most diverse Middle Eastern American (Arabic/Chaldean Speaking) communities in the United States, which plays a key role in the economic growth and demographic composition of Michigan. The socio-economic characteristics and cultural contributions of the community are unique in nature and rich in content, and a vital part of the mosaic in the State of Michigan. However, there is no current comprehensive demographic analysis of the diverse Middle Eastern community’s impact statewide. Therefore, CMEAA, in partnership with the Michigan Talent Investment Agency (TIA), is conducting a study with the help of the Center for Urban Studies at Wayne State University. Results from the study will provide scientific and comprehensive demographics, and an economic overview of the contributions of Middle Eastern Americans in Michigan. The study will wrap up in late Spring of 2018.

## Commissioner Highlight



### **Manal Boukzam Saab, Chairperson**

Manal Saab is Chief Executive Officer of Sorensen Gross Construction Services in Flint, Michigan. Mrs. Saab joined SGCS after spending 17 years in healthcare at the MetroHealth System in Cleveland, Ohio, leaving as the Director of Government Affairs and Community Relations overseeing local, state, and national healthcare legislation for one of the nation's largest and most successful publicly owned hospitals at the time.

Community service plays a significant role in Mrs. Saab's life. She is active on the local, national, and international levels. Mrs. Saab was appointed by Governor Rick Snyder to Chair the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs for the State of Michigan. She is the past Chair of the National Advisory Board of the Arab American National Museum. She is also an Emeritus member of the Board of Governors of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities (ALSAC) of Memphis, TN, founded by the late entertainer Danny Thomas.

Mrs. Saab is a member of the national professional advisory board of the Center for Arab American Philanthropy (CAAP) – the only national Arab American philanthropy program in the country. Her passion to her birth country of Lebanon is evident by her commitment to advancing its medical facilities serving as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Lebanese American University (LAU) Health Foundation for University Medical Center-Rizk Hospital in Lebanon. Locally, Manal is a Trustee of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint.

Mrs. Saab and her husband, Ghassan, are the first Flint-area philanthropists to receive the 2010 Russell G. Mawby Award for Philanthropy, the highest award recognizing philanthropy in the State of Michigan and the Rotary International Crystal Award. They were both selected 2016 honorees by ACCESS, the largest Arab American Social Services organization in the U.S. Mrs. Saab is the recipient of the 1996 Volunteer of the Year Award from ACCESS-Ohio and the 2006 Distinguished Volunteer Award from the Michigan's Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Mrs. Saab is a summa cum laude graduate of Cleveland State University with a master's degree in Public Administration and has completed the Business Management Program of the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio. She is one of six children born in Beirut, Lebanon to Amin and Fahima Boukzam. Currently lives in Fenton, Michigan with her husband and her three children – Rashal, Amir, and Sana.

# State of Michigan Program Highlight

## Community Ventures

The Community Ventures program (CV) is an economic development program that promotes structural employment and social enterprise in the state's most distressed urban areas. CV is coordinated by the Michigan Talent Investment Agency (TIA), this initiative helps unemployed individuals pursue career opportunities at Michigan companies in the areas of Flint, Detroit, Saginaw, and Pontiac.

Any Michigan company can participate in the CV program if it is willing to hire talent residing in the targeted urban communities and is able to provide long-term-sustainable opportunities for employment in full-time positions. Eligibility criteria for those seeking to use the CV program for employment opportunities must include at least one of the following:

- ◆ Lack of education
- ◆ Lack of functional literacy
- ◆ Long-term disconnection from employment
- ◆ Low income
- ◆ Ex-offenders
- ◆ At-risk youth
- ◆ Limited English

Michigan's CV initiative empowers talent and helps create safer and vibrant communities by placing the structurally unemployed into jobs. The CV program uses regional partnerships, business support networks, and works with start-ups and expansions to help fill jobs and provide those using the CV program a living wage. The program also partners with businesses that have a willingness to hire individuals that may face barriers finding employment elsewhere.

Community Ventures also provides the following services to employers and CV participants:

- ◆ Provides employer \$5,000 per eligible applicant hired into long-term employment.
- ◆ Success coaches
- ◆ Navigator services
- ◆ Soft Skills training
- ◆ Career pathway

The program has helped fill 1,300 new jobs and establish wages of a minimum of \$10.00/hr. for participants, with a goal of reaching \$12.00/hr. Over 12 months Community Ventures has a retention rate of 65% for those using the program for employment opportunities.

The ultimate goal of the Community Ventures program is to provide participants with career pathways, and work cooperatively with partners to provide additional services to all within the program.

For additional information please visit the Community Ventures website at <https://www.mitalent.org/community-ventures>.

# Partner Highlight

## Chaldean Community Foundation

The Chaldean Community Foundation (CCF) is the charitable arm of the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce and nonprofit organization located in Sterling Heights Michigan. CCF works with the needs of the Chaldean American Community by providing education opportunities, charitable giving, and advocacy. CCF also received a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. CCF provides many services to Chaldean Americans via their many programs. Examples of these programs include:

- ♦ **English as a second language** – teaches English through a partnership with Macomb Community College.
- ♦ **Career Services** – job search training and placement.
- ♦ **Hard of Hearing, ESL, American Sign Language, Life Skills (H.E.A.L.) Program** – Helps those with hearing impairments to live more independent lives.
- ♦ **Braille ESL Acculturation Mobility (B.E.A.M.) Program** – Helps those with visual impairments live a more independent life.
- ♦ **Behavioral Health** – Provides mental health referral services to those in need within the community.
- ♦ **Refugee Acculturation Sustainability and Training (RAST)** – Helps refugees and others acculturate and become less dependent on state and federal services.

These and many other programs are exceptional services that the CCF provides to its ever-growing community members.

Some highlights of FY2017 for CCF include:

- ♦ Serving more than 26,000 individuals.
- ♦ Serving 2,265 disabled individuals.
- ♦ Conducted 1,250 job placements that include placing 610 people into full-time jobs. A placement rate of 49%.
- ♦ 3,343 immigration applications filed.
- ♦ Providing more than \$80,000 worth of in-kind medical services via Project Bismutha. The project provides free or reduced cost healthcare to Iraqi Christian and Chaldean refugees without medical insurance.

CCF has made expansion plans for the coming year and have developed a site plan to add an additional 18,000 square feet of space. The plan for the expansion is to increase space for the Breaking Barriers Program which will include a multi-functional gym/motor skills area, providing services for seniors and youths as well.

For more information on the Chaldean Community Foundation and all it has to offer, please visit their website: <http://www.chaldeanfoundation.org/>.



# Research Highlight



The New American Economy (NAE) report on New Americans role of reviving the Great Lakes Region illustrates how immigrants are contributing to Michigan's economic and cultural growth.

The report [New Americans and a New Direction \(The Role of Immigrants in Reviving the Great Lakes Region\)](#) touches on several factors such as manufacturing, population trends, healthcare, entrepreneurship, agriculture, spending power, taxes and home ownership and includes several case studies as well.

## Key findings from the report:

Immigrants keeping the Great Lakes region workforce viable as more than 70% of the area's immigrants are of working age. From 2000-2015, immigrants to the Great Lakes region drove almost two-thirds of regional growth. New American's are also bringing a more talented workforce with 35.3% of immigrants holding a bachelor's degree, compared to 29.2% of the U.S. born population 25 and older.

New Americans have helped to revive the manufacturing industry as well as creating a boom in healthcare professional jobs. Foreign-born workers made up one out of every seven manufacturing engineers in 2015. Immigrants also made up 27% of the region's physicians and surgeons in 2015.

Between the years 2000 and 2015 the number of immigrant entrepreneurs grew to 120,000, and by 2015 more than one out of every 10 entrepreneurs in the region was foreign-born.

The spending power of New Americans continues to help grow the Great Lakes region as in 2015 they held close to \$130 million in spending power or 8.2% of the region's growth.

These examples and others included in the [NAE report](#) show just how much impact New American's have on not only Michigan's economy but the entire Great Lakes region which includes Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

# Research Highlight

## Research Highlight from the SE Michigan Refugee Collaborative



Global Detroit, in partnership with the University of Michigan and the SE Michigan Refugee Collaborative, recently published a report on the “Economic Impact of Refugees in Southeast Michigan.” The report focuses on several aspects of refugee resettlement including, best practices, the economic impact on household spending, resettlement agencies, owned business, and refugee stories and

profiles.

The report found that refugees who resettled in Southeast Michigan over the past decade have generated between \$229.6 - \$295.3 million in new spending along with creating 1,798 – 2,311 jobs. Michigan is the fourth largest state for resettlement in 2016 resettling over 34,000 refugees over the past decade. From 2007-2016, 21,466 refugees resettled in the areas of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

65% of the refugees were of working age between 16-64, while 30% were under 16 years of age. Only 5% were 65 years or older.

This study shows that refugees and refugee resettlement contribute to Michigan’s economy by creating jobs, developing communities and increasing economic activity in the areas that refugees live. New Americans in Michigan have a combined spending power of \$1.2 billion and contribute \$130 million in local and federal taxes according to The New American Economy data. All refugees’ contributions to Michigan are vital for the state’s continued growth and economic success.

Members of the SE Michigan Refugee Collaborative include: Global Detroit, USCRI, Catholic Charities of SE Michigan, Arab American Chaldean Council, Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Macomb County, Chaldean Community Foundation, ACCESS, Washtenaw County Michigan Works, State of Michigan Office of Refugee Services, Samaritas, Neighborhood Family Health Center, City of Detroit Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, Welcoming Michigan and the Michigan Office for New Americans.

Global Detroit, a nonprofit regional economic development initiative, is helping to revitalize Metro Detroit by mobilizing New Americans and getting them into the workforce. For more information visit [Global Detroit’s website](#).

[The full report can be viewed here.](#)

# Photo Gallery



*MONA's Global Michigan meeting held in September 2017 with a panel about international students featuring representatives from Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University and Central Michigan University.*

*Governor Snyder and MONA Director Bing Goei with the three Ethnic Commission Chairpersons at the New Americans Gala in October 2017.*



*Cabinet Director Mike Zimmer being honored with the Global Detroit Champion award at Global Detroit's annual event in October 2017.*



## Photo Gallery Cont.



### Mission

To help grow Michigan's economy by attracting global talent to our state and promote the skills, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit of our immigrant communities.

*MONA's Ethnic Cabinet meeting at Eastern Market held in August 2017.*



*MONA's Global Michigan meeting held in September 2017 with guest speakers, John Austin and Steve Tobocman.*

[www.michigan.gov/mona](http://www.michigan.gov/mona)



[www.michigan.gov/lara](http://www.michigan.gov/lara)



LARA is an equal opportunity employer/program.

## Submissions

We encourage you to submit articles, information, photos, and comments to us – your input is important. If you would like to submit articles for the *MONA News Connection*, you may submit them via e-mail to [NewAmericans@michigan.gov](mailto:NewAmericans@michigan.gov).

For additional information about the Michigan Office for New Americans, go to [www.michigan.gov/mona](http://www.michigan.gov/mona)